

# OBSERVANCE AND NON-OBSERVANCE OF GRICEAN MAXIMS IN INSTRUCTIONAL CONTEXT: AN ANALYSIS OF EFL CLASSROOM INTERACTION

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## Abstract

This study was intended to describe, analyze and explain types of observance and non-observance of Gricean Maxims, conversational implicatures and factors of non-observance produced in the classroom. The subjects were the teachers and students of grades seven and eight of Gandhi Memorial International School (GMIS). The data for this naturalistic qualitative study were collected through observation and interviews which were then analyzed by using Paul Grice's (1975) Cooperative Principle theory. The study showed that both teachers and students observed all of the Gricean maxims in certain part of classroom teaching activities. This study also found that the teachers produced high percentage of flouting the maxims. Teachers often preferred not blatantly giving instructions in the classroom but hoped the students to find the implied meaning. Meanwhile the students produced high percentages of violating the maxims and infringing the maxims. In this case, the students failed to observe the maxims because they were unable to speak clearly or lacked language ability in English. Furthermore, in conversational implicature, it was found that teachers and students used flouting the maxims most (53.33 %) than violating the maxims (46.66 %) in classroom interaction. The study showed that both teachers and students flouted and violated maxim of quality, maxim of quantity, maxim of relation and maxim of manner. However, teachers and students preferred indirectness and did not observe Gricean maxims with the intentions of showing politeness and making jokes. When a face threatening act was involved, they employed conversational implicature and often violated the cooperative principle of conversation.

*Keywords: Observance of maxims, Non-observance of maxims, Conversational Implicature, Flouting, Violating, Politeness, Face threatening act.*

## INTRODUCTION

Language is a communication device to communicate with each other. By using language someone can make statements, convey facts and knowledge or report something and keep social relations among the language users. These indicate that by means of language, people can express their ideas, feeling and information through communication. We can analyze utterances on the basis of assumptions that exist in the context or even beyond the context, so that we can analyze their meaning whether they are literal meaning or non literal one. In order

to communicate to others, the listeners have to know the speaker's aim and the intention in producing an utterance. The speaker should be aware of what they are saying and the listeners have to understand the speaker's intention. Effective communication can not be achieved if these factors are ignored.

Pragmatics deals with the mismatch between what is said and what is really meant, since in most communicative scenarios, speakers mean more than they say in a strictly semantic sense (Beatriz, 2008 in Hammou 2012). In pragmatics, we

study conversation in which the intention of the conversational is might be hidden by the speaker because by one utterance many things can be implied.

Grice in Brown and Yule (1983:31) mentioned that the term implicature is used to account for what the speaker can imply, suggest, or mean, as distinct from what the speaker literally says. Besides, Grice also argued that conversational implicatures are determined by the conversational meaning of the words used. It is an interesting analysis because as the dynamic humans who use dynamic language, it cannot be denied that we unconsciously often make conversational implicature causing some violations of conversational principle for several reasons.

In EFL classroom, teaching and learning are always mediated through language, so theories of communication, precisely expressed by those trained philosophers like Paul Helbert Grice who have turned their attention to the practical use of language, could arguably be of intrinsic interest to all teachers. This discussion is instead of asking whether such important theories of communicative practice are applicable. It will be necessary to adopt a dual approach considering both what is taught in language lessons and how language is taught through classroom communication. Pragmatics is applicable to language teaching, because classroom language teaching is an occupation which essentially uses language in a social context to promote the learning and teaching of language for use in social contexts. We have to consider why communication often fails and how it can be more successful; pragmatics is a central competence to teach students who will use language outside the classroom and to teach teachers who will mediate its use for learning inside the classroom.

Furthermore, the success of any teacher begins with his or her ability to communicate. Classroom observation is no doubt the most direct means of gaining insight into teachers' instruction as well as learners' classroom behaviors. It is claimed that all of the factors that affect

performances at school, teachers have the most impact on their learners' school experiences. Lack of appropriate language instruction, inadequate curricula, and negative school environments damage students potential to learn and develop. Therefore our attention should be directed to the need to deal with causes that affect students' learning such as the impact of classroom discourse on the behavior of the students. Students and teacher must build a positive relationship, while a positive relationship built on trust, understanding and caring which will foster students' cooperation and motivation and increase their learning and achievement at school. Relationship building is vital for the students, who are aggressive, non compliant, shy and withdrawn.

Furthermore, this research aimed to show how the importance of teachers' classroom management for the positive students' relationship and increase the students' motivation and learning achievement at school, To sum up, pragmatics has much to tell us about communication in the educational context across the world where communicative competence is elevated as the main goal. In this study, the researcher considered Gricean pragmatics in relation to language teaching.

Grice (1975) Cooperative Principles has been one of the most influential models within the field of pragmatics. There are several conversational principles, and one of them is co-operative principle. Grice mentioned several maxims of co-operative principle, such as: maxim of quality, maxim of quantity, maxim of relevance, and maxim of manner.

In the maxim of quality the speakers should be truthful, they should not say what they think is false, or make statements for which they have no evidence. In the maxim of quantity the speaker should be as informative as is required for the conversation to proceed; it should be neither too little, nor too much (it is not clear how one can decide what quantity of information satisfies the maxim in a given case). In the maxim of relation, the speaker should relate clearly to the purpose of the exchange. In the maxim of

manner, the speaker should be perspicuous: clear, orderly, brief, avoiding obscurity and ambiguity.

The speaker can deal with the maxims in several ways such as that they can follow (observe) them, flout one of them, violate them, opt out of one of them or infringe them. When flouting a maxim, the speaker does not intend to mislead the hearer but wants the hearer to look for the conversational implicature, that is, the meaning of the utterance not directly stated in the words uttered. Therefore, when the speaker intentionally fails to observe a maxim the purpose may be to effectively communicate a message (Thomas 1995). Through speakers appear not to follow the maxims; they expect hearers to appreciate the meaning implied. In contrast to flouting, when violating a maxim the speaker intends to mislead the hearer. A speaker can be said to 'violate' a maxim when they know that the hearer will not know the truth and will only understand the surface meaning of the words. The speaker deliberately supplies insufficient information, says something that is insincere, irrelevant or ambiguous and the hearer wrongly assumes that they are cooperating. When opting out of a maxim the speaker is unwilling to cooperate and reveal more than s/he already has. The speaker chooses not to observe the maxim and states an unwillingness to do so. When the speaker infringes a maxim the speaker unintentionally deceives or fails to observe the maxim. The speaker does this with no intention of generating an implicature. Infringing occurs when the speaker does not know the culture or does not master the language well enough, as when s/he is incapable of speaking clearly, as for example, when drunk or incapable to speak clearly.

Considering the views described above, the present study focused on the classroom interaction during teaching and learning process at Gandhi Memorial International School (GMIS) that includes investigation of : 1) types of teachers and students' observance of Gricean maxims, 2) types of teachers and students' non-observance of Gricean maxims, 3) types

of implicatures which were generated in EFL classroom, 4) factors of teachers and students' violation of Gricean maxims in the classroom interaction. This study examined the classroom process from the discourse analysis perspective to analyze an EFL classroom situation. So through this research, it was hoped that teachers will be able to improve their teaching performance and students will improve their achievement at school.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This research was design as a qualitative research since the source of the data was teaching and learning activity in naturalistic environment of the classroom. The study was meant to analyze and explain the observance and non-observance of Gricean maxim in conversational implicature as reflected in teacher's speech and students interaction in the classroom during the teaching and learning process. The subjects of this study were teachers and students of Gandhi International International School (GMIS). The primary subjects were 2 teachers (1 male and 1 female) with different teaching experiences. The secondary subject were 50 students (20 males, 30 females) from grade seven (VII) and eight (VIII) which were recruited from 2 classes.

The data used in this study were collected through observation and interviews. Data were gathered from teachers and students' performance on oral interaction in the classroom. Six (6) sessions of classroom interaction were recorded. Later, data extracts were selectively and purposefully transcribed and examined in detail. Data were triangulated from three sources: in-depth observation by teacher in the classroom, audio-taping of classroom interaction and reflective analysis of field notes. The data then analyzed using Miles and Huberman (1984) analysis model which involves four activities, namely; data collection, data reduction, data display and conclusion drawing/ verification.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this research, Grice (1975) theory was used to analyze the types of observance, non observance and implicatures produced in the classroom of Gandhi Memorial International School (GMIS). The analysis showed that both teachers and students observe all of the Gricean maxims in certain part of classroom teaching activities. Most of the teachers and students in this study have formulated an efficient and effective use of language in conversation. The total utterances of observance on Gricean Maxims produced by teachers and students were 16 utterances. In quantity maxims, generally both of teacher and students gave a contribution as informative as required in classroom interaction. The amount of information influenced the success of teaching and learning process. The following was the example of the observance of quantity maxim produced by teacher in classroom at Gandhi Memorial International School (GMIS).

*S : When we have to submit it?*

*T : On Monday*

From the example above, teacher just gave the right amount of information about the due time for the students to submit their homework. The amount of teachers' talk influenced students' learning and interaction in the classroom. Teachers usually exert their control over student by talking. If teacher moderate their control by obeying Grice's maxim of quantity and thus cut their talk time, the students will be encouraged to contribute more to the discourse. Therefore excessive teacher was avoided to give learners more opportunities for producing comprehensible output. Getting students to speak in classroom discussion is a vital part of a teachers' job. Students are the people who need the practice. Therefore, a good teacher maximizes students' talk and minimizes teachers' talk.

Analyzing the data collected, the students also produced the high percentages of observing maxim of quality. According to Grice (1975), the maxims of quality enjoins speaker not to say anything they believe to be false or

lack adequate evidence. In other words speakers are expected to be sincere and tell the truth. The observance of maxim of quality which was done by student can be seen as the following example:.

*T : How about adverbial phrase?*

*S : I don't know*

On the conversation above the student has answered the question truthfully (quality) that he did not do the exercise. The student has said precisely what he meant that he did not know the answer and has generated no implicature. In this case the student was observing the maxim of quality by telling the truth. Actually teachers have a right to control and organize the students in classroom activities during the teaching and learning process. These functions were implemented by teacher to make the process of teaching and learning run effectively and properly.

Answering the second research question, the data showed that both of teachers and the students produced 35 utterances of non-observance of maxims. Teacher did more flouting than the students. Most of flouting produced by teachers in this research were flouting the maxims of manner (5), and then followed by quantity (2), relation (1) and none of quality. The high percentages of flouting the maxims which were done by teachers indicated that teachers often preferred to generate an implicature in the classroom interaction. Teacher flouted the maxims when giving instructions or asking students to do something in the classroom and then hoped the students to find the implied meaning. Here the teachers were avoiding offence and preventing students from losing face. So the students' positive feelings toward the teachers were essential for the teachers in accomplishing teaching and learning goals. The following was the example of flouting the maxims of manner and quantity produced by teacher:

*S : The book has said that Sir*

*T : That's the book*

It can be noticed that the teacher was not cooperative with her student and did not communicate effectively with her learner. The student's question was not answered with the apparently irrelevant

responses "*that's the book*". The quantity and manner maxims were flouted and the teacher sabotaged the communication. Teacher sometimes flouted the maxims to maintain social relationship with the students and thus establish mutual trust that is one of the fundamental factors of efficient exchange of ideas. Hurting the student's feeling, for the example by directly saying "*You are wrong*" could be avoided if politeness had been given more importance than transmitting the information. So here the teacher was given a choice between saying the truth or hurting students' feeling. This condition can be seen as example below:

*T: Can anybody think about an animal story that you know?*

*S: Mr Fox, vacation of Mr Fox*

*T: Is that the story that people do remember?*

The teacher was not making her contribution as informative as required thus she was flouting the maxims of quantity deliberately to cooperate in the communication with her student. She did this in order not to threaten the students' face. Politeness then refers to the way that teacher took to save the student's face needs into account. Feedback is often ambiguous and thus open to interpretation, but they can also be considered polite ways to avoid offence and prevent conflict and disruption to occur.

Researcher has found that positive feedback is much more effective than negative feedback in changing students' behavior. According to Nunan (1989), positive feedback was thought of being made up of short interjections of "Good", "Very Good", "Allright", etc. Meanwhile, negative feedback consisted exclusively of the teachers' repetition of the students' response with a rising intonation, which reveals that high achieving students were more likely to be praised while low achieving students were praised much less frequently. These finding might suggest that more effective feedback will increase students' motivation and encourage them in using the target language.

The example of flouting the maxim of quality produced by students can be seen on the example below:

*T : What are the differences between phrase and clause?*

*S : Mrs Clause?*

Based on the conversation above, it can be seen that the student said something which was blatantly untrue in which he lacked adequate evidence about the term of "Mrs Clause". It implied that he didn't know about the differences between phrase and clause, and tried to make a joke. Grice's four basic maxims of cooperative principles were often unobserved or flouted. However, this does not mean that the cooperative principles are abandoned. In Grice's analysis, the student's violation of a maxim combined with the teacher's assumption that the students had not really abandoned the cooperative principles leads to an implicature.

EFL classroom is a social context in its own right, it is the capital importance to understand the nature of classroom discourse focusing on Grice's cooperative principles by recognizing the important relationship between language use and pedagogical purpose. The goal oriented activities in which teacher and students are engaged are shaped by and for the work progress of the lesson. Teachers and students adjust their use of language according to the task in which they are involved. Grice's maxims are not rules to follow blindly but they do provide the reflective teacher with a useful means of critically examining his or her own interactive behavior since the object was not really achieved. The students did not understand the instructions because the teacher did not find the appropriate words that can simplify the subject matter and thus convey the message successfully. In terms of quality, the teacher tends to generalize by giving vague explanations.

Another finding also showed that the students did more violation of Gricean maxim than the teacher. Most of violations produced by students in this research were violating the maxims of quantity (9), and then followed by manner (3) and none of violation in maxims quality and relation.

These findings indicated that the students often preferred to intentionally mislead the teacher by generating maxims of quantity and manner for several purposes. Generally in the observed classes, the students were passive learners and they preferred to convey simple explanations or answers in the classroom interaction. The violation of maxim of quantity which was produced by the student can be seen on the example below:

*T : What are paragraph be called in the narrative?*

*S : Sequence*

*T : Of?*

*S : Events*

From the conversation above, it can be seen that students was not being informative as required, the teacher had to repeat in asking the question in order to get full answer. Violating the maxims of quantity and manner appeared regularly in lessons of T1. Students in this class did not respond to the teacher's questions that were meant to stimulate the discussion. On occasions where a student did answer, the answer was too short and uttered in a quiet tone of voice that may be described as 'mumbling'. Since the response was rarely heard by the whole class, the teacher often had to repeat it aloud. Additionally, the students in this class were reluctant to talk during classroom discussion but obeyed all of the teacher's instructions; they opened the book to read when they were requested. Very low participation on the part of the students was observed since they were not given time to do the task. The violation of maxims of manner produced by the students can be seen on the example below:

*T : Are you a caring person?*

*S : Sometimes*

On the conversation above, the student did not explain the comprehensive utterance by only saying "*sometimes*". The teacher would get confused with student's response because it was hard to understand. This study revealed that teachers need direct more attention and adjust their classroom strategies. The result of observation showed that there were reliable variations in the student's

speech act as a result of their choice in terms of observing Gricean maxims or violating them for several reason. It can be concluded that students often failure to observe the maxims of quantity and manner. The students often found themselves unable to observe these maxims which signaled their dilemma by flagrantly failing to give the right amount of information. In classroom language teaching, classroom performance is managed not just by the teacher, but by all presents. Teachers are not seen only as teacher, learners simply as learners. One primarily roles for the teacher is to facilitate the communication process in the classroom where students feel secure, unthreatened and non-defensive.

The autocratic teacher discourages learners from developing their own ideas. She or he sets objectives and assign task, creates a dependent atmosphere, maintain her/his own responsibility, criticizes, interrupt his/her interlocutors speech and embodies aggressive behavior. This also reinforced the teachers' confidence in the students to be able to perform the material. By building the students' confidence, teacher appears less an authority figure, increasing the solidarity between himself/herself and the students. When a student is not provided the necessary opportunities for discourse by the teachers during a given lesson, negotiation of meaning does not occur and fluency is impeded.

In other case, the students also produced the high percentages of infringing the maxims. The students produced 5 utterances which can be categorized into infringing of the maxims. According to Grice theory, infringing the maxims happens when the speaker unintentionally deceives or fails to observe the maxim. The speaker does this with no intention of generating an implicature. Infringement could take place if the speaker is in drunk, or simply can not speak the language well as with a child or foreign language speaker. In the observed classes, the students often did infringement due to a lacked language skills. The example can be seen as follow:

*T : What is the function of "comma" in sentence?*

*S : To make sentences more shorter*

From the conversation above, the student infringed the maxims of quality. On this example, the student lacked language communication skill (grammar) and was unable to observe the maxims. So when the speaker had an imperfect knowledge or performance of language, the speaker will infringe the maxims like a student above who has imperfect command of the language.

In line with Thomas (1995) concept who states that nervousness, darkness, excitement may make impairment of the student's performance, in these cases s/he does the infringement. From the data, students sometimes infringed the maxims which were performed by emotions and states, such as excitement and nervousness. Following was the example of this infringement:

*T : No matter what you do, a world would be a better place because of what?*

*S : What?*

From the conversation above, the infringement occurred because the student had no perfect knowledge to communicate and brought the nervousness. The difference between violating and infringing were located in the fact of speaker's intention. In violating the speaker is liable to mislead the hearer, whereas in infringing the speaker unintentionally fails to observe a maxim.

Answering the last research question, it was discovered that the teachers and students produced some of violation of maxims based on several factors; (1) showing politeness strategies, and (2) making jokes. Leech (1983) sees politeness as crucial in explaining why people are often so indirect in conveying what they mean and as rescuing the cooperative principle in the sense that politeness can satisfactory explains exceptions to and apparent deviation from CP. In the real world, people do not always follow the cooperative principle. People often try not to give information which is unfavorable to themselves or to the hearers. When they are questioned about the information which they do not

want to release, their face is at risk. It is not easy for them to be sincere and violations of Grice's maxims occur. Brown and Levinson classify the ways of doing FTA's indirectly according to the kind of violation of Grice's maxims: when the relevance maxim is violated, people give hints, association clues, or presuppose.

The following conversation was an example when the teacher gave hints instead of making clear statement:

*S : Miss, should we copy this today?*

*T : We didn't discuss the second and third conditional yesterday*

Violation of the quantity maxim results in understating, overstating, or tautologies. An example of understating was as follows:

*T : How does a word describe a verb?*

*S : Mostly with the (-ly)*

In the following conversation, student was questioned about his understanding of "words' memorization". Student avoided to give specific answers to the question and gave such expressions as "I do not really know" like the following quotation:

*T : What is word's memorization?*

*S : I do not really know what is this but i'm afraid to say i've copied it from textbook and not looking by yourself"*

The student's negative face was threatened by being asked about something that he didn't understand. In order to save his face, student tried not to release any information. This was a violation of the maxims of relation in which his answer didn't relevant to the question. He was also violating the maxim quantity in that he did not give enough information. From looking at this interaction, student did not seem to feel that he must be cooperative with the teacher when his face was threatened. He sounded more concerned about keeping his face from his classmate. By looking at this kind of interaction, indirectness in this case was employed in order to keep student's negative face. And he succeeded in doing so by violating the maxims of relation and quantity. As the researcher has observed, people try not to give much information to the questioners who threaten their face. In such cases, often encounter violations of

Grice's maxims because people are neither concerned about being cooperative nor about keeping relationship in the conversation. They try to keep their face and their independence as much as they can. When the face of people of higher status is threatened, it is easier for them to ignore their responsibility to respond sincerely to the questioner. They keep their negative face by giving very vague answers such as "I do not recall," "I cannot answer the question," etc.

According to Brown and Levinson (1983), politeness formulas are used to protect the face or public self respect of the listener. In this case, if the teacher is in position of authority over the students, saying "please" or using the conditional makes it less obvious that a command is being given to students who are required to obey. Such analysis could suggest that teacher use politeness formulas because of their desire to protect the self-esteem of their students. They might wisely did not to subdue students' thinking or provoke them to the point of rebellion. Moreover the teachers do not feel superior to their students, but in fact live in fear of an outbreak of the students' opposition and use politeness formulas to avoid confrontations that they fear to lose. Thus the motivation for the use of indirect discourse strategies could be efficient to the teachers to control students' behavior in the interest of learning.

In other case, humor played a main role in helping to close the communication gap in the classroom interaction by providing an alternative channel of communication. It lowers the degree of resistance between people and establishes the rapport that nurtures the environment of trust in which discussion can move forward. So in communication, when someone produces humor, they expect to mislead and be misled and their communication and thus not necessarily merely truth oriented. For instance, a joke at the beginning of a speech breaks the ice between the speaker and the audience.

As Levinson (1983) point out "joking is a basic positive politeness technique". Joking is also used for people to feel that

they share the same value and it is used to maintain each other's positive face. However, the occasions in which people joke seem to be different on each country. Below was the example of flouting the maxims in order to make a joke which was produced by students in classroom interaction:

Data 1:

*T : In Australia we say brochure as "Brocia" so when i say brochure you know what i meant?*

*S : Is it like Brow shower now?*

Data 5:

*T: What are the difference between phrase and clause?*

*S : Mrs Clause?*

From the both conversations above, the students made the joke in purpose to change the topic of conversation. However in data 5 the students didn't have any ideas to respond the teacher question and then tried to make a joke. A joke was achieved so the conversation is not amusing at all.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis of teachers and students classroom interaction during teaching and learning process at Gandhi Memorial International School (GMIS), this research comes to some conclusion as follow:

First, generally both teachers and students observe all of the Gricean maxims in certain part of classroom teaching activities. Most of the students in this study have formulated the efficient and the effective use of language in conversation. Second, the students and teachers also produced non-observance of maxims in the classroom interaction. They were flouting the maxims, violating the maxims, and infringing the maxims. It was found that the teacher produced the high percentage of flouting the maxims. Teachers often preferred not blatantly in giving instructions in the classroom but hoped the students to find the imply meaning. Meanwhile the students produced the high percentage of violating the maxims and infringing the maxims. In this case, the students were failed to



observe the maxims because they were unable to speak clearly or lack of language ability in English. Third, based on the result of the study, it could be counted that each category of conversational implicatures had different percentages. Accordingly, the percentages of each conversational maxims were as follows: flouting the maxims was 53.33 % and violating the maxims was 46.66 %. Therefore flouting the maxims was the most frequent utterance produced in classroom interaction, it means that both teachers and students expect each other to realize that the utterances are not to be taken literally. Fourth, the teachers and students did violation in Gricean maxims for several purposes; these could be used as stylistic devices to show politeness and creating humour. So when a face threatening act is involved, people employ conversational implicature and often violate the cooperative principle of conversation. In order to keep face, people use positive politeness and negative politeness, both of which are the representations of indirectness in the conversations

### **SUGGESTIONS**

EFL teachers should exploit Grice's maxims to create a communicative atmosphere in their English classroom basing their teaching style on cooperation. In linguistics terms, classroom interaction should offer students the opportunities to negotiate meaning and therefore facilitates the communicative competence development. The teachers need to develop a close rapport with his/her students and create a supportive atmosphere to encourage learner's participation. The teacher and students should establish trustful relationship. To be facilitators, teachers need empathy, acceptance and congruence because students look upon teachers as parents, hearers and responsible.

It is advisable for the EFL teachers to be flexible in their teaching method, and know when to intervene in students' conflict. They need to know how to set up classroom structure so that students can be responsible of their learning.

It is also valuable to recommend the further research to conduct the similar topic of research (classroom conversational maxims) with bases on various subjects' aspect namely: gender, age and school environment. The further researcher also may conduct a research deeply on flouting or violating the maxims such as the creation of humors in the language teaching context to build the teacher-students relationship and enhance the students' participation in the classroom.

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